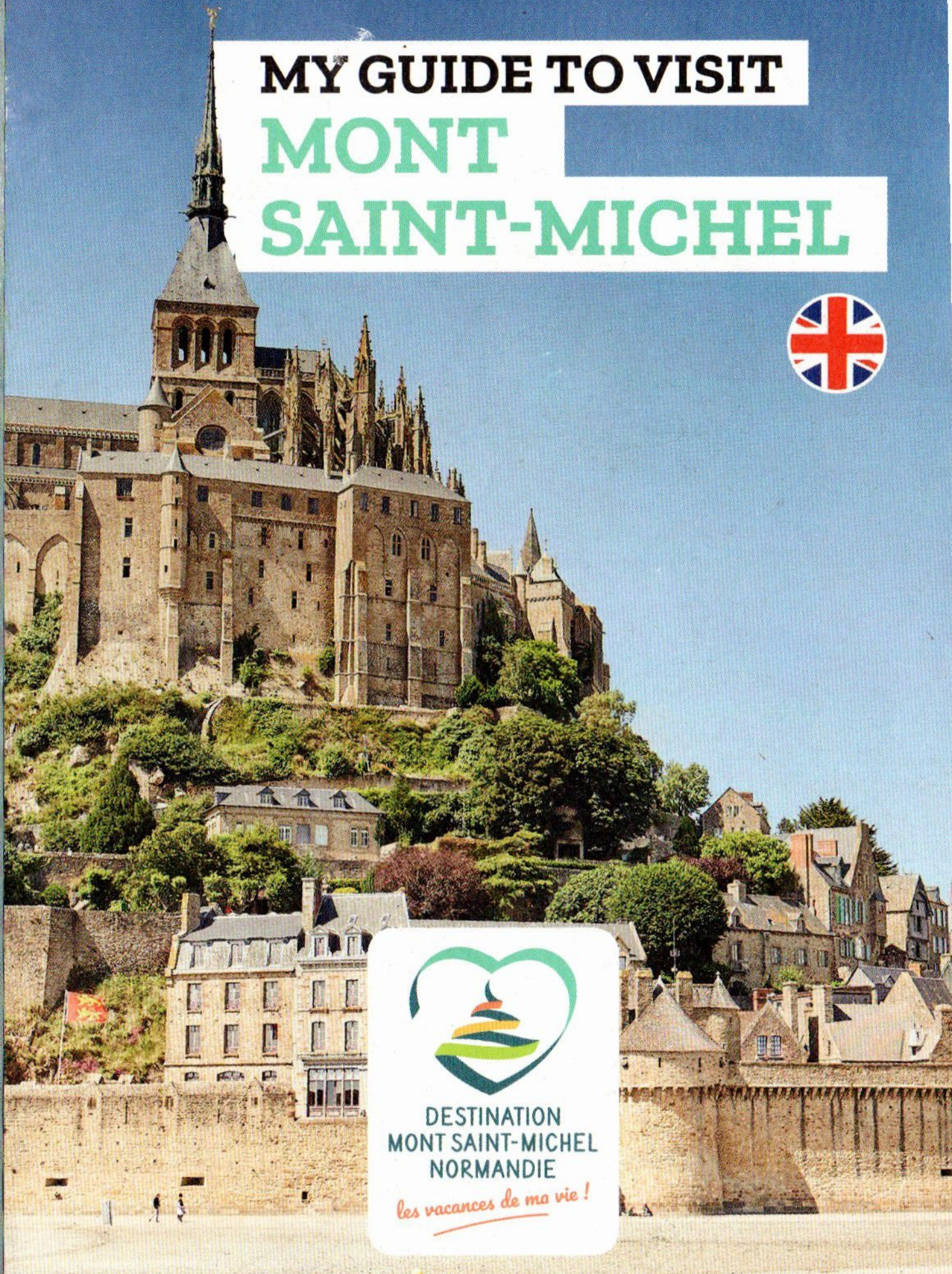
MY GUIDE TO VISIT
MONT SAINT-MICHEL



DESTINATION
MONT SAINT-MICHEL
NORMANDIE
les vacances de ma vie !

www.ot-montsaintmichel.com

LE MONT-SAINT-MICHEL

HISTORY

The granite rock of Mont Saint-Michel was originally called Mont Tombe. In the year 708, the Archangel Michael appears in dreams to Saint-Aubert, bishop of Avranches, and asks him to build a sanctuary in his name.

In 966, a community of Benedictines settle and build the first church. At the same time, a village begins to develop to welcome the first pilgrims; the numbers grow, making the church too small. In the eleventh century, four crypts and a large abbey church are built. In the thirteenth century begins the construction of the "Merveille": two buildings of three floors, crowned by the cloisters and the refectory of the monks.

The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) made it necessary to protect Mont Saint-Michel by a set of military constructions that allowed it to withstand a siege of almost 30 years. The islet of Tombelaine, 3 km, became an English stronghold, it still retains today the ruins of a fort and a dungeon. During the English siege, the Romanesque choir of the abbey church collapses.

The French Revolution, the monks abandon the abbey, which is transformed into a state prison. Until 1863, 14,000 prisoners passed through this «Bastille des Mers», where tides and quicksand make any escape impossible.

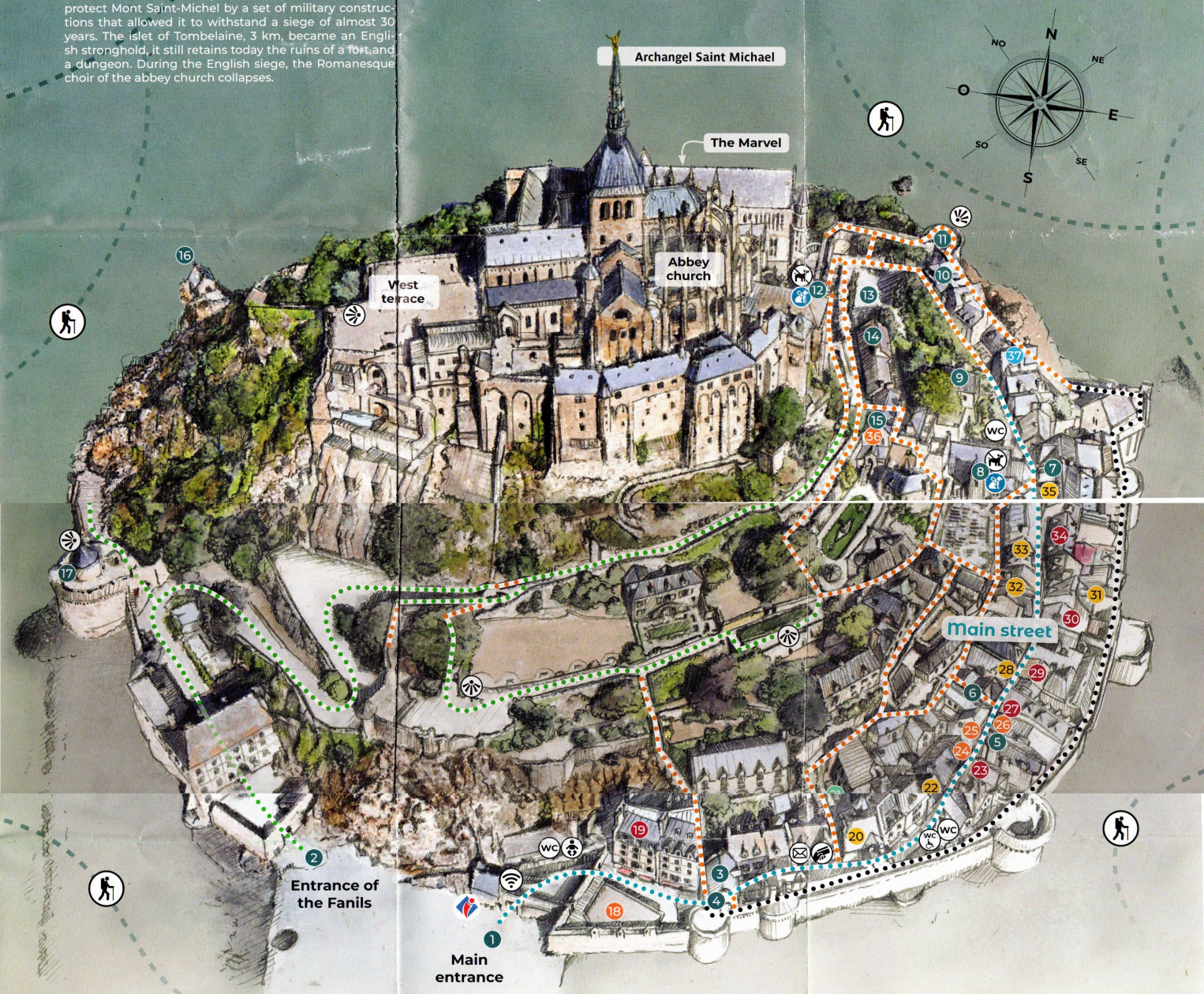
In 1874, the service of The Historic Monuments restored the building and opened it to the public.

More and more people start to visit, so to transport the mass of visitors, a road embankment was built in 1879. Between 1901 and 1938, a steam train connects the town of Pontorson to Mont Saint-Michel; the Mount thus loses its maritime character, which it will only find thanks to the recent work of the dam, which reduces the sand sediment in the bay.

The site was miraculously spared during the Second World War: the Germans still occupied between 1940 and 1944.

1966 marks the return of a community to the abbey. Monastics of Jerusalem provide since 2001 a permanent spiritual presence, and welcome pilgrims and visitors from around the world.

Since 1979, Mont Saint-Michel and its bay have been listed as World Heritage by UNESCO.



The essentials of the Mount

1. Main entrance
2. Entrance of the Fanils
3. Drawbridge
4. Town hall
5. Maritime and ecology museum
6. Cuckolds' alley
7. Archeoscope
8. Parish church of st Peter
9. Tiphaine's house
10. Pilgrim house
11. North tower
12. Abbey entrance
13. Jerusalem cross
14. The small school
15. History museum
16. Chapel of St Aubert
17. Gabriel tower

- Main street
- Stairs
- Route of the Fanils
- Route of the ramparts

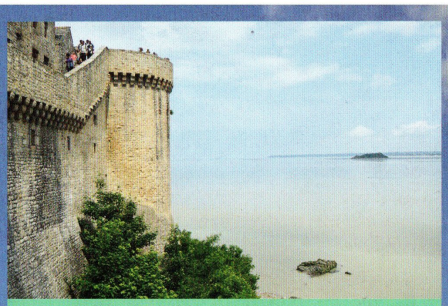
- Food, Take away
- Bar, Restaurant, Creperie
- Hotel
- Hotel/Restaurant
- Bed and Breakfast

In the village

18. La Terrasse de la Mère Poulard
19. Auberge de La Mère Poulard***
20. La Confiance
21. Les Terrasses Poulard***
22. La Sirène
23. Auberge Saint-Pierre***
24. La Fringale
25. Le Petit Breton
26. La Belle Normande
27. La Croix Blanche***
28. Le Chapeau Rouge
29. Le Du Guesclin**
30. Le Mouton Blanc***
31. La Terrasse du Mouton Blanc
32. Le Saint-Michel
33. La Cloche
34. La Vieille Auberge**
35. Les Terrasses de la Baie
36. Le Café Gourmand
37. La Tête Noire

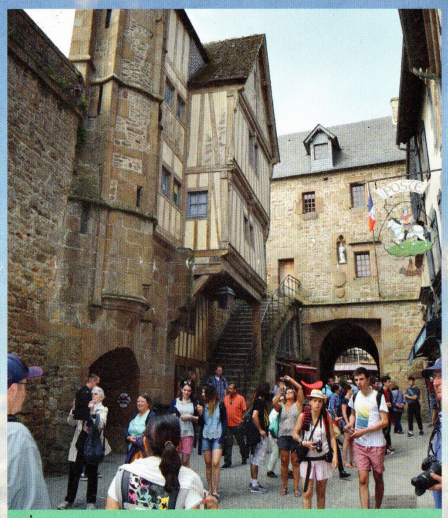
- Toilets
- Disabled toilets
- Wi-Fi
- Baby changing facilities
- Animals not allowed
- Assistance dogs authorised
- Tourist Office
- View point
- Post Office
- Cash withdrawal
- Visit only accompanied by a guide

The bay is dangerous, even in the immediate vicinity of Mont Saint-Michel. Do not venture without a certified guide.



THE RAMPARTS

Since the Hundred Years War, the construction of ramparts has given Mont Saint-Michel its reputation as an impregnable fortress. Seven towers communicate with each other by a walkway. The North Tower (13th century) is an excellent point of observation of the tidal bore. The ramparts also allow you to join the abbey.



THE STREET

«La Grande Rue» the main street of the village is accessible after having crossed three successive doors defending its access.

The first, named Porte de l'Avancée and formed by a double carriage entrance and a pedestrian door leads to the court of the same name. It houses the former gatehouse «Corps de Garde des Bourgeois» built in the early sixteenth century and current tourist office.

The second door is named Porte du Boulevard, and the third is Porte du Roy. We then enter the main street, Grande Rue, which has preserved its medieval shops. Many of them have kept their original signs. St. Peter's Church, the pilgrim's house and the Jerusalem Cross, testify, at the top of the village, of the past and present spiritual activity of the place.

SOUVENIRS

With the first pilgrims, souvenir shops settled in the village. In these shop, stalls everyone could buy a souvenir of his trip, lead pilgrim badges moulded with the scallop shell of which represented Saint Michael. Today the shopkeepers maintain this tradition of the Middle Ages and are at the service of pilgrims and travellers from around the world in search of a souvenir of their passage.

CUCKOLDS'ALLEY (A CUCKOLD IS THE HUSBAND OF AN ADULTEROUS WIFE)

Also called «Venelle du Guet» (lookout alley), it is the smallest street of Mont Saint-Michel. It is so narrow that you could not pass with horns, hence its name. To find it you take the Grande Rue and turn left in front of the Hotel La Croix Blanche.

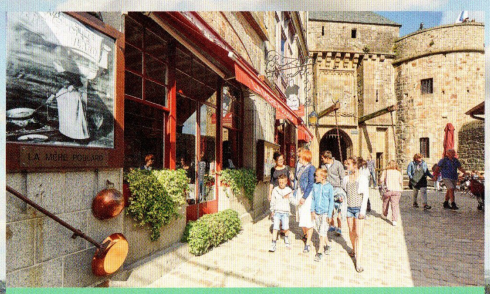
THE ABBEY AND THE CLOISTERS

Crowning the island of granite in the heart of the bay, theatre to the largest tides in Europe, the abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel was both a famous monastery, a fortress inviolate during the Hundred Years War and one of the largest centres of pilgrimage of medieval Christendom.

Founded at the request of Archangel Michael by Bishop Aubert of Avranches, the first sanctuary was dedicated October 16, 709 and will become the heart of a large Benedictine abbey, renowned in the Middle Ages for its treasures and rich library.

Next to the abbey church and Romanesque monasteries raised between the 10th and 12th century around the summit of the rock, the monks and their builders build at the beginning of the 13th century on the north side, a formidable Gothic construction: «the Marvel." A true masterpiece of Norman medieval architecture, its cloister harmoniously blends Chausey granite, Caen stone, and English Purbeck marble.

Becoming a prison in the French Revolution the combination of Romanesque and Gothic buildings, completed by a belt of walls during the Hundred Years War, was beautifully restored from the late nineteenth century.

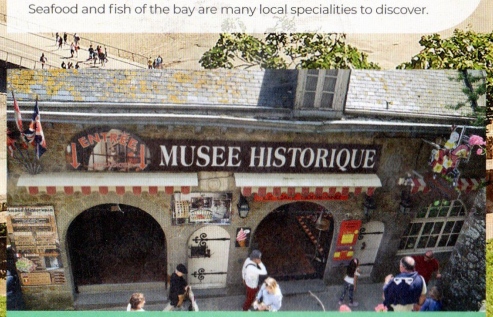


GASTRONOMY

Hotels and restaurants contribute to the renowned reputation of Mont Saint-Michel: Annette Boutiaut arrived at Mont Saint-Michel in 1872 as a maid. The following year, she married Victor Poulard. They acquire an inn together and offer a simple dish, consistent and quick to prepare: the famous puffy omelette by Mère Poulard, ideal to reinvigorate pilgrims after their trying journey. The first establishment was at the current location of the Post Office, but the business flourished, and in 1888 they moved into the establishment we know today. The omelettiers are demonstrating every day the preparation of the omelette cooked over a wood fire.

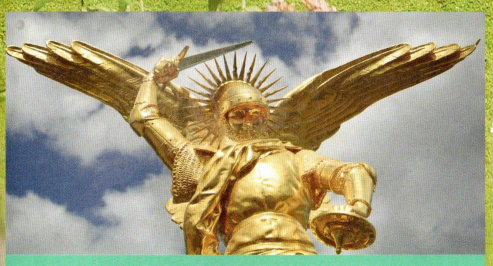
Another speciality well known: salt marsh lamb. The sheep of the bay graze on the grass covered by the sea. This grass gives the flesh of the "grévin» a soft and tender texture, firm and with little fat.

Seafood and fish of the bay are many local specialities to discover.



MUSEUMS

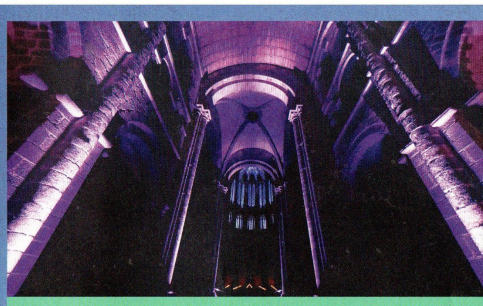
Four museums bring back to life the history of the site: scenes of historical reconstruction (old collections, weapons, paintings, sculptures, watches); collection of 250 old models of ships; explanations of the tidal phenomenon; periscope; the house of knight Bertrand du Guesclin.



ARCHANGEL SAINT MICHAEL

Archangel Michael, whose name in Hebrew means "he who is as God?" appears many times in the Bible. The chief of the «celestial legions», he is often portrayed as an armed knight fighting Satan.

This cult came from the East in the fifth century and later on develops throughout the West; it settles in Mont-Saint-Michel at the beginning of the 8th century, making this rock one of the greatest pilgrimages of Christianity in the Middle Ages.

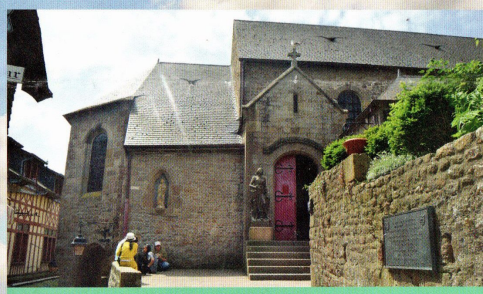


NIGHT SHOW IN THE ABBEY

After discovering the changing lights during the day, the abbey and its architecture are sublimated after dark. From July 7 to September 1, 2018, every evening except Sunday, 7.30 pm to midnight (last entry 11 pm), let yourself be surprised by «The Chronicles of the Mount – At the beginning», the new night itinerary entrusted by the CMN to Amaclio productions.

Chronicles of the Mount unfold at night in the heart of the abbey, when the millennia fade and Nature, Man and the Lord compose a marvellous symphony of visions, flashes, and sonic mirages. An unprecedented technological deployment throughout an evening wandering freely, offering 14 original scenographies.

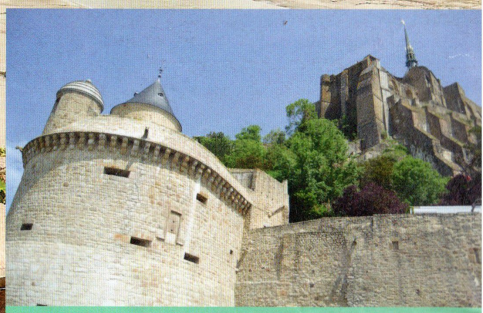
Centre des monuments nationaux
Abbaye du Mont-Saint-Michel
50170 Le Mont-Saint-Michel
Tel.: +33 (0)2 33 89 80 00
Wander freely inside the abbey during the evening in July and August



PARISH CHURCH OF ST PETER

The parish church, built in the 15th and 16th centuries, is now the official place of devotion to the Archangel Michael. It is nonetheless dedicated to Saint Peter who, according to the Catholic religion, holds the keys to the gates of paradise. Pilgrims arriving at the mount symbolically pass St Peter before reaching the abbey, an image of paradise on earth.

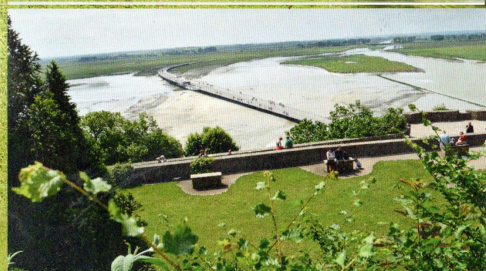
The statue of Joan of Arc enthroned at the entrance of the church pays homage to the archangel who guided her during the Hundred Years War. The village cemetery is next to the parish church, where you can find the grave of Mere Poulard (change tomb).



GABRIEL TOWER AND QUAY

This tower crowned with machicolations, which protects the west side, bears the name of the lieutenant King, Gabriel du Puys, who built it around 1524. A century later, a mill was built at the top of this tower and, in the late nineteenth century, it also serves as a lighthouse to direct the boats engaging in the Couesnon.

A small opening on the right of the Gabriel Tower gives me access to the old quay. Mooring rings still bear witness to the maritime activity of the past.



THE SMALL GARDENS

Half of the village has always remained free of constructions. When Mont Saint-Michel was besieged, the inhabitants cultivated these protected grounds to provide for their needs. Even today, the houses along the Grande Rue hide small enclosed gardens, that can be seen from the ramparts or by walking through the alleys and suspended stairs. Some of these gardens flower the «Merveille du Mont Saint-Michel», a variety of native roses with an exceptional fragrance. At the foot of the abbey, below the dwellings, the monastic community continues to cultivate a vegetable garden. The north side of the rock, steep and rugged, remains in its natural form.

AROUND THE MOUNT

THE "CASERNE" & CAR PARKS

THE "CASERNE"

- Food, Take away
- Supermarket
- Bar, Restaurant, Creperie
- Hotel
- Hotel/Restaurant
- Campsite

1. Le Relais St-Michel****
2. Hôtel La Digue*** et restaurant panoramique
3. Le Relais du Roy***
4. Hôtel Gabriel***
5. Brioche Dorée
6. Les Galeries du Mont Saint-Michel
7. Le Pré Salé
8. Mercure****
9. La Rôtisserie
10. Hôtel Vert**
11. Camping du Mont Saint-Michel
12. Le Saint-Aubert***
13. La Bergerie
14. La Ferme Saint-Michel

Le Mont Saint-Michel

Distance of Mount – car parks or on foot: 2.7 km

Departure and arrival of "Maringote"

Departure and arrival of the bus line Pontorson – Mont Saint-Michel

Departure and arrival of the passeur: 350 m on foot

- Toilets
- Disabled toilet
- Information centre
- View point
- Wi-Fi
- Baby changing facilities
- No animals allowed (except small dogs transported in a bag or basket)
- Assistance dogs authorised
- Automatic payment machines Cash/Credit card
- Automatic payment machines Credit card

HOW TO ACCESS MONT SAINT-MICHEL

I arrive **by car**

With my car, I access the vast compulsory car parks. Numbered from P2 to P13. I am situated near the shuttles that take me to the Mount from 7:30 am to midnight every day.

At the entrance of the car park, I take my ticket; I pay before leaving at the automatic terminals. The price of the car park includes the shuttle as well as the free services of the CIT (toilets, baby area, information).

I go to the Mount **on foot**

1 • Around 45 min

From the parking lot, I reach Mont-Saint-Michel on foot in about 50 minutes.

3 itineraries are proposed to me:

> **The footpath, "La Lisière",** an incredible view of the Mount via a well-kept pedestrian path, accessible to all.

> **The central footpath "Mount Saint-Michel"** leads me through "the caserne", an area of activities where we find hotels, restaurants and a supermarket.

> **The footpath, "The river banks of the Couesnon",** take advantage of the dam, this major hydraulic work in the restoration of the maritime character of Mont Saint-Michel.

I access the Mount with the free **Passeur**

2 • Around 12 min — FREE ACCESS

Every day, from 7:30 to midnight, a regular shuttle takes me to Mont-Saint-Michel in about 12 minutes.
This links the «Place des Navettes» (next to the Tourist Information Centre and car parks) to the terminus located 350 meters before the Mount.
Depending on the crowds and the season, the frequencies of the shuttles vary between 5 and 20 min. 2 intermediate stops are proposed: «Route du Mont» (mini market, restaurants and hotels) and «Place du barrage» before arriving at the Mount.
Outside of these hours, a shuttle bus transports on request. Contact: +33 (0) 2 14 13 20 15.

I reach the Mount with the bus line **Pontorson – the Mount**

3 • Around 20 min — PAID SERVICE

From Pontorson train station, a regular bus, corresponding to the arrival times (and departure) of the trains, takes me to the foot of the Mount. An intermediate stop at the area of the Mount.

I reach the Mount with **the horse-drawn carriage**

4 • Around 25 min — PAID SERVICE

Pulled by two horses, this carriage, called «Maringote» takes me near to the entrance of Mont-Saint-Michel naturally and effortlessly, via the bridge, in about 25 minutes. The frequency of departures varies according to the season.

Arrival / departure **Public bus lines (SNCF)**

5 Arrival and departure of public transport lines Manche, Ille-et-Vilaine and SNCF bus.

Good to know:

Problems getting around:
I can consult on the website "Tourisme pour tous." Wheelchairs available at CIT.

I am a cycle tourist:
Limit the access to the mount.
Bicycle parking available at the car parks, caserne & dam. No bicycle parks at the mount.

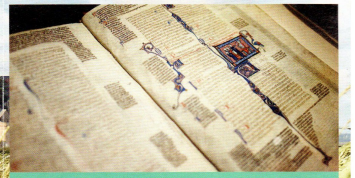
I visit with a pushchair:
The Passeur is accessible with a pushchair but the Mont Saint-Michel, because of its many steps, is difficult to pass. I favour the baby carrier.

Parking and access to the Mount from "the Caserne"

P PARKING SPACE (near caserne)

- Disabled car park (vehicle -5m)
- Car park (-5m)
- Car park camper vans
- Car park coaches
- Car park motorbikes
- Parking bicycles

DISCOVER THE SURROUNDING AREA OF MONT SAINT-MICHEL



I visit Avranches, the Scriptorial and the treasure of Saint Gervais

20 kilometres from the mount, I can discover the city of Avranches nestled at the top of a hill. The relics of Bishop Aubert, who received the divine visions of Archangel Michael, are on display at the Treasury of St. Gervais Church. The Scriptorial, museum of manuscripts of Mont Saint-Michel, unveils the history of scrolls, calligraphy and illuminated, unique treasures of the medieval library of the abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel.

Crossing the bay with a certified guide

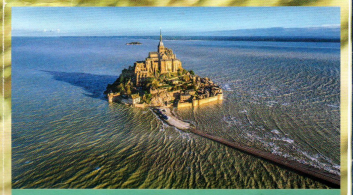
The crossing of the bay, hiking across the seashore, is inspired by the thousand-year-old tradition of pilgrims on their way to Mont Saint-Michel. Henceforth this nature excursion is accessible to all people wishing to live an unforgettable experience. The suggested formulas, by the certified guides, are numerous, from the simple discovery of the quicksand (1h30), the tour of the Mount (2h), the Mont Saint-Michel to the islet of Tombelaine (3h) to the return crossing of 13 km (6h).

I get to know the salt marsh sheep

The salt marshes are the meadows covered by the sea during the big tidal coefficients. This characteristic salt marsh allows the pastoral rearing of sheep and gives their flesh an inimitable taste. It is thanks to the vegetation called halophyte, it can adapt to the salinity of the ground, which the sheep feed upon, hence this special character taste. This meat does not have a very pronounced salty taste, but its flavour is recognised finer than a classic country lamb.

I discover the polders

When I face Mont Saint-Michel, I see on the left, the polders, a characteristic landscape of the bay. During the nineteenth century, these lands are taken from the sea thanks to the construction of irrigation dikes, allowing to develop the cultivation activity: Carrots, potatoes, salads or pink shallots are grown in these very fertile areas.



I understand the tides and the tidal bore

Every day, the level of the sea varies according to the phenomenon of the tides. Greater or weaker depending on the position of the moon and the sun in relation to the Earth. At the full moon, the sun and the moon are in alignment with the Earth: it's time for high tides and here I can see the highest tides in Europe!

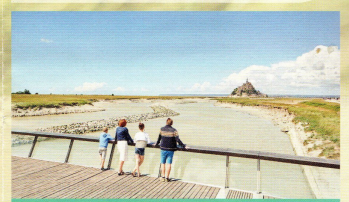
A natural and magical phenomenon, the tidal bore is a wave that can reach several tens of centimetres during high tides (spring tides). The rising tide runs upstream to the mouth of the river and suddenly forms a rise in water. In the bay of Mont Saint-Michel, the tidal bore rises upstream of three coastal rivers: Sée, Sélune and Couesnon.

I fly over Mont Saint-Michel

Like a bird, I can fly over Mont Saint-Michel and its bay aboard a microlight or plane. In this infinite sky with harmonious colours, I discover the beauty of the sea, the meanders of the rivers, the ripples on the sand, the dunes, the polders and the Mont Saint-Michel, which sits in the middle of this immensity: an unforgettable spectacle!

I hike on the footpaths of Mont Saint-Michel

The great European sites dedicated to St. Michael such as Monte Gargano or the Sacra di San Michele in Italy, Aachen in Germany, Liege in Belgium (etc ..) all join Mont Saint-Michel via a network of footpaths. I can take these paths that are an opportunity to approach Mont Saint-Michel under incomparable cultural and spiritual dimensions and write my personal journey.



I stroll on the dam and the bridge

The dam and the bridge are two masterpieces that contribute to the restoration of the maritime character of Mont Saint-Michel. Since the dam, daily water has been released (varying times depending on the tides) allowing to naturally push the sand sediment.

Walking on the bridge to access the Mount is, without a doubt, the most contemplative way to get to the Marvel. An experience you need to live!

Mont Saint-Michel Tourism Office - Normandy

TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE INTRAMURAL

The Tourist Information Office of Mont Saint-Michel is located on the mount, on the left of the main entrance, and welcomes you every day *, throughout the year.

(* except 25/12 and 01/01)

Boulevard de l'Avancée
50170 Mont-Saint-Michel
GPS coordinates:
48.615914 (48 ° 36'57.29 «N) / -1.465602

Tel.: +33 (0) 233 601 430

tourisme.lemontsaintmichel@msm-normandie.fr

www.ot-montsaintmichel.com

SERVICES :

- MAP available in 14 Languages
- Ticket sales (Abbey skip the line ticket)
- Souvenir shop
- Wi-Fi
- Photocopying
- A diploma "Miquelot" for those who have finished the paths of Saint Michael

Do not litter